

Land Under Pressure

Trace how desertification changes Africa's environment.

SS7G2.c "Explain the impact of desertification on the environment of Africa."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline phrases that show a cause and an environmental effect of desertification. Number three different environmental effects you find.

When Dryland Loses Its Cover

- ① Across the southern edge of the Sahara, farmers and herders depend on thin soils, grasses, and short rainy seasons. Desertification happens when productive dryland becomes less able to support plants and animals. It can occur after repeated drought, but human actions can speed it up. When too many animals graze one area, or when people cut trees for fuel, fewer roots hold soil in place. Wind and sudden rain then carry the loose, fertile topsoil away. The land may become bare, hard, and less useful.
- ② Vegetation loss changes how water moves through an area. Plants slow rainwater and help it soak into the ground. On bare land, rain can rush across the surface, cutting gullies and washing soil into streams. Less water enters the soil, so wells and small rivers may have less water during dry months. Dust from exposed ground can blow into the air, reducing air quality and covering crops. As plant cover shrinks, insects, birds, and other animals lose food and shelter. This reduces biodiversity in affected places.
- ③ The Sahel, a broad belt south of the Sahara, includes places where desertification is a serious concern. Its effects reach beyond a single field or village. Lower crop yields and poorer grazing land can push families to clear new land or move livestock farther, which may add pressure to remaining vegetation. Soil carried into rivers can harm water quality and reduce the storage space in reservoirs. Restoring plant cover, protecting young trees, and managing grazing can help soil stay in place and allow land to recover.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What two human actions in the passage can speed up desertification?

2 How does the loss of plant cover affect rainwater and the amount of water available during dry months?

3 Describe two ways desertification can affect living things in an area.

4 What can happen when loose soil is carried into rivers?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose one human action named in the passage. Write four sentences explaining how it can lead to two environmental impacts in Africa, then include one action people can take to reduce the harm.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline phrases that show a cause and an environmental effect of desertification. Number three different environmental effects you find. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What two human actions in the passage can speed up desertification?	Allowing too many animals to graze one area and cutting trees for fuel.
2	How does the loss of plant cover affect rainwater and the amount of water available during dry months?	Rainwater rushes over bare land instead of soaking into the ground. As a result, wells and small rivers may have less water during dry months.
3	Describe two ways desertification can affect living things in an area.	It can reduce crop growth and grazing land, and it can cause insects, birds, and other animals to lose food and shelter, reducing biodiversity.
4	What can happen when loose soil is carried into rivers?	It can harm water quality and reduce the storage space in reservoirs.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

When too many animals graze one area, they remove plant cover. Without enough roots, wind and rain can carry fertile topsoil away. Bare ground also lets less rainwater soak into soil, so wells or small rivers may hold less water during dry months. Managing grazing can give plants time to grow back and protect the land.

Accept equivalent cause-and-effect explanations that match the passage. For the open response, accept a logical four-sentence chain with one named human action, two environmental impacts, and a realistic protective action.